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JAB-O-METER TAKE YOUR SHOT

Mar22 27,30,436 doses
Mar23 28,17,612 doses
TOTAL: 1,82,19,08,764

NATIONWIDE	MAR 22	MAR 23
Fresh cases	1,581	1,778
Recoveries	2,741	2,542
Deaths	33	62

KARNATAKA	MAR 22	MAR 23
Fresh cases	92	93
Recoveries	143	128
Deaths	2	1

'RUSSIA TO USE NUKES IF ITS EXISTENCE IS THREATENED'

Moscow's domestic security policy allows it to use N-weapons on such occasions, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said

UKRAINIAN FORCES GO ON THE OFFENSIVE

Last month, Russian president Vladimir Putin had ordered his nuclear forces to be put on high alert. Meanwhile, Ukrainian soldiers are putting up stiff fight to regain lost ground from the invaders. On Tuesday, they had retaken the city of Makariv. "The Ukrainians are going a bit more on the offensive now," said US Defence Dept spokesperson John Kirby

POLAND EXPELS 45 RUSSIAN DIPLOMATS

- Poland's Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski claimed these were in fact Russian spies pretending to be diplomats
- Amid the US' bid to isolate Russia further from the international community, Putin plans to attend the next G20 summit in Indonesia later this year with China's backing | P12

6,257

THE NUMBER OF NUCLEAR WARHEADS BELIEVED TO BE IN RUSSIA'S POSSESSION

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HC STEPS IN. DON'T FORGIVE CULPRITS: PM

Court takes suo motu cognisance of killing in Birbhum; Mamata to visit site today

RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR
@New Delhi

THE horrific killing of eight persons, including two children, in an alleged revenge attack by Trinamool goons in West Bengal, took a new turn on Wednesday with the Calcutta High Court taking suo motu cognisance of the incident and directing the state government to file its probe report by 2 pm on Thursday.

The court also directed the Delhi Central Forensic Science Laboratory to send a team to the crime site in Rampurhat in Birbhum district to collect samples for forensic examination. It instructed the police to extend protection to the witnesses, including a boy injured in the arson, and ordered CCTV cameras to be installed at the crime scene and made functional until further orders.

Parallelly, the National Commission for Women directed the state DGP to take stringent action in view of the "brutality meted out to people including women" in the heinous crime.

The Trinamool Congress was in the line of fire from almost all quarters with Prime Minister Narendra Modi sharing his anguish and saying those who encourage such crimes must not be forgiven. P10

Charred remains of the houses set on fire at Rampurhat in Birbhum | PTI

PETROL, DIESEL PRICES HIKED AGAIN

₹0.80
INCREASE / LITRE

A day after the four-month freeze on price revision of fuel prices was lifted, the three state-owned oil marketing companies on Wednesday raised fuel rates by 80 paise each, for the second day in a row | P13

State cut social services spend by 3% in 2020-21: CAG

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE state finance audit report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year ended March 31, 2021 has pointed out that the share of expenditure under social services decreased by around 3 per cent during the financial year as compared to the previous year.

The CAG noted, "Adequate priority needs to be given to education and health sector as the ratio of expenditure under the sector to aggregate expenditure was less than the general category states and some of its neighbouring states."

Experts said the reduction was because of the pandemic and resulting poor collection of taxes. The report noted that Karnataka, which had recorded revenue surplus since 2004-05, witnessed a revenue deficit for the first time in 2020-21 to the tune of Rs 19,338 crore. P4

Non-Hindus can't do biz near temples: Minister

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Act prohibits non-Hindu vendors from conducting their business on the premises or properties belonging to temples and the law was passed during the Congress government, said Law Minister JC Madhuswamy on the floor of the Assembly on Wednesday.

He was responding to Congress members, who questioned the decision of temple committees to prevent non-Hindus from doing business in and around temples in coastal Karnataka. Congress members objected to certain organisations putting up banners and posters near temples declaring this.

The minister said that one should not feel the government is encouraging such incidents that are damaging peace in society. "The government has no role. As per rules framed under the Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Act in 2003, non-Hindus cannot be given the lease of properties like ground, building or any other place that belongs to state-owned temples," he said.

These rules were not framed by BJP, but Congress that was in power at that time, he pointed out.

If the banners are put up on roads and away from the temples, only then the state government can take action against perpetrators, he added.

CONTINUED ON: P4

Centre's curbs to end on March 31

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

WITH a visible drop in the number of Covid-19 cases in the country, the Centre on Wednesday asked states and Union territories to end all Covid containment measures from March 31. The decision to end the curbs came two years after the Disaster Management Act, 2005, was invoked following the pandemic outbreak.

However, wearing face masks and other Covid-appropriate behaviour such as maintaining physical distancing will continue, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla said in a letter addressed to all state chief secretaries.

"After considering the overall improvement in the situation and preparedness of the government to deal with the pandemic, NDMA has decided that there may not be any further need to invoke the provisions of the DM Act for Covid containment measures," the letter read. Therefore, no further advisory may be issued by the home ministry after the expiry of the ministry's last order issued on February 25, Bhalla added. The current order expires on March 31.

The ministry had issued its first order and guidelines under the DM Act 2005 for Covid containment in the country on March 24, 2020. It has since then issued modified orders from time to time. The Centre's Covid restrictions are being withdrawn but people still need to remain watchful of the situation, Bhalla said. The letter advised states to remain alert and take prompt and proactive action if any surge is observed.

EXPRESS READ

Scare as plane rolls back 100 ft at KIA

Bengaluru: The passengers on board an AirAsia India flight were in for a scare when their aircraft that had reached Bengaluru from New Delhi moved nearly 100 feet in reverse, after it had landed and parked.

Lalu admitted to Delhi AIIMS again

New Delhi: Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Lalu Prasad, who was discharged from AIIMS here around 3 am after being kept under observation overnight, was brought to the hospital again on Wednesday and admitted in a general ward, official sources said. P10

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